Questions and Inversion in Ocotepec Mixtec[*]

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Yes/No questions, Wh-questions, and embedded questions in Ocotepec Mixtec are described and analyzed within the Government and Binding framework. Questions involving prepostional phrases are unique in that the whole prepositional phrase must be fronted and then the question word is subsequently fronted again. Similar inversion occurs when a possessive phrase is questioned. Smith Stark (1988) documents this phenomenon as occurring across language families throughout Meso-America. Aissen (1996) analyzes it for Tzotzil, a VOS language, as secondary movement to the specifier of PP or DP. This analysis is not possible for Mixtec, a VSO language, so I posit adjunction to the moved phrase, following Black (1994) for Zapotec.

1. Introduction

Mixtec languages are characterized by VSO word order. In the past VSO languages have been described in the literature with flat structures, making the relationships between Infl, the external argument, and the verb cumbersome to describe and characterize. In this paper I posit a deep structure SVO ordering with the subject as the specifier of the VP, following the Internal Subject Hypothesis (Koopman & Sportiche 1991, McCloskey 1991, among others). Verb movement to Infl derives the surface VSO order. When analyzed in this manner, the VSO word order of Mixtec complies with language universals such as the close relationship between a verb and its object, which has been shown to hold in other VSO languages (Chung 1983, McCloskey 1991, Black 1994).

Most of this paper is then devoted to describing Yes/No questions, Wh-questions, and embedded questions and to giving an analysis for the fronting which occurs. Finally, there is an interesting inversion of the Wh-word with its preposition after fronting in a question. I analyze this as Pied-Piping of the $PP_{[+wh]}$ with a secondary raising of the Wh-word. A similar secondary raising accounts for the inversion which occurs in a questioned possessive phrase. The analysis is presented within the Government and Binding framework (Chomsky 1981, 1982, 1986).
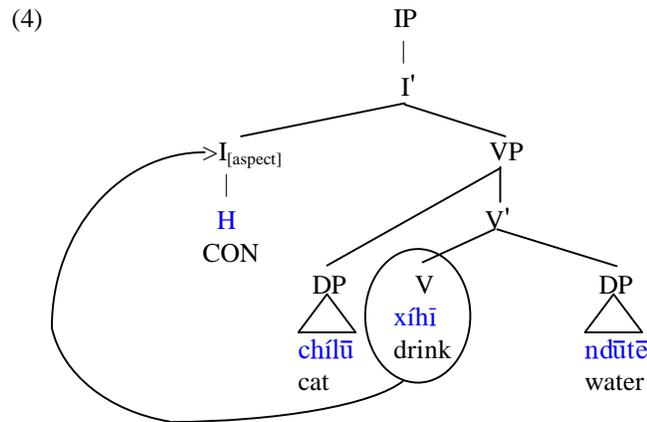
2. Basic Clause Structure

This section covers basic word order, focus constructions, nominal phrases, and prepositional phrases. This provides the necessary background for understanding the analysis of questions.

2.1. Basic Word Order

The basic word order of Ocotepec Mixtec[1] is VSO, as shown in (1). Example (2) shows the normal unfronted position of adverbials.

(1) xíhī   chílū   ndūtē[2]   (Alexander 1988:161)
     CON:drink[3]   cat   water
     The cat is drinking water.

(2) sátíñú   de   mītān   (Alexander 1988:172)
     CON:work   he:RES   now
     He is working now.

Woolford (1991) proposed an analysis for Jacaltec, a genetically unrelated Mayan language which is like Mixtec in that it also has VSO order. If it were applied to Mixtec, example (1) would be diagrammed as in (3).[4]

(3)

```
                              IP
                          /      |
                    SPEC         I'
                              /      \
                          Infl        VP
                           H           \
                          CON           V'
                                    /    |    \
                                  V      NP     NP
                                xihī    chílū   ndūtē
                                drink    cat    water
```

An alternative analysis, which I posit here, claims that the subject occupies the specifier position of the VP in the D-structure, following the Internal Subject Hypothesis (Koopman & Sportiche 1991, McCloskey 1991, etc.). Movement of the verb up to I (Infl), which is filled by the Aspect marking morpheme, accounts for the VSO order. This verb movement is motivated by the

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[1] Bradley and Hollenbach (1988) give the following background information: "The Mixtecan language family is one branch of the Otomanguean stock that has spread through central and southern Mexico. This family includes Mixtec, Trique, and Cuicatec, ... It is found primarily in the western half of the state of Oaxaca, but extends over its western border into the state of Guerrero and over its northern border into the state of Puebla. The most prominent member of the Mixtecan group today is Mixtec, at least in terms of numbers of speakers, (almost 250,000) and area occupied (roughly 10,000 square miles). Furthermore, it is not the single language that its name suggests, but a collection of perhaps twenty mutually unintelligible languages" (p. 1). "Ocotepec Mixtec is spoken by approximately 8000 people living in Santo Tomás Ocotepec, Santa Cruz Nundaco, and Santa María Cuquila, all in the district of Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca, Mexico" (p. 157).

[2] Interlinear examples use the orthography and punctuation of Alexander's 1988 article.

[3] Abbreviations used, following Bradley and Hollenbach (1988:xi): ADD additive, COM completive, CON continuative, FAM familiar, INC incompletive, INT interrogative, ME male ego, NEG negative, PL plural, POT potential, REP repetitive, RES respect, SG singular, SPEC specifier, UN unspecified third person.

[4] Note that Ocotepec Mixtec has an aspectual system that is marked by a prefix, or a tone, or both.

morphological subcategorization of the aspect marker to attach to V (Rizzi and Roberts 1989). See figure (4) for example (1).

(4)

IP
│
I'

I[aspect]   VP

H   V'
CON

DP   V   DP

chílū   xíhī   ndūtē
cat   drink   water

2.2. Focus Construction

One of the variations on the basic VSO order which can occur is due to focus. Subjects, as in (5), objects, as in (6), and adjuncts, as in (7), can be fronted. This focus fronting is analyzed as movement to the specifier of IP, as shown in (8) for example (5).

(5) teē   ñúkwán   kihin   (Alexander 1988:172)
     man   that   POT:go
     THAT MAN will go.

(6) ndīkā   xehē   ñā   nuu de   (Alexander 1988:173)
     banana   COM:give   she   face his:RES
     She gave him A BANANA.

(7) xehe   tātá   de   shí:kó   de   nuni   (Alexander 1988:173)
     foot   father   his:RES   CON:sell he:RES   corn
     He sells corn FOR THE SAKE OF HIS FATHER.

(8)

IP
│
I'

DP_j   I   VP

teē ñúkwán   L-kihin_i   V'
man that   POT-go
                    t_j   V

                             t_i
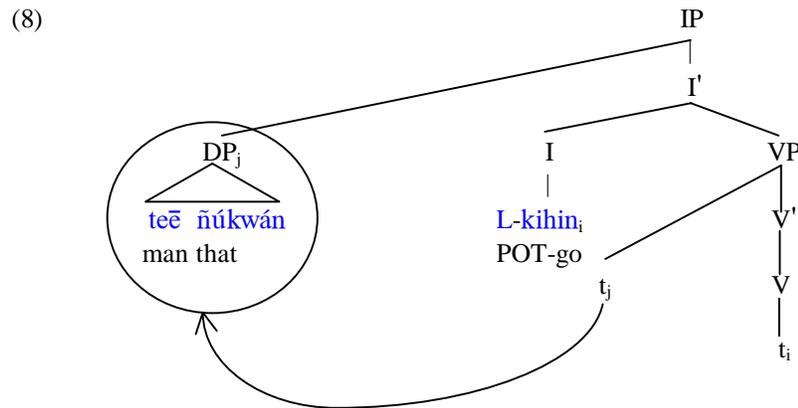
2.3. Nominal Phrases

Mixtec nominal phrases are not marked for case. A number of distinct positions are needed, most of which follow the noun. These first two examples show first a noun noun compound and second a noun modifier compound.

(9)   yōhō ká:ā   (Alexander 1988:211)
       rope metal
       wire

(10) ndūtē shéēn   (Alexander 1988:212)
       water fierce
       white rum

Examples (11)-(17) show that determiners and quantifiers occur before the head noun. Note that quantifiers always come before the determiners māá and ndá. See (26) for the ndá example.

(11) māá   vēhē   (Alexander 1988:213)
       SPEC [5] house
       the very house

(12) kumi māá   teē   (Alexander 1988:213)
       four SPEC   man
       four of only men

(13) ndá   de   (Alexander 1988:213)
       PL   he:RES
       they

(14) kumi teē   (Alexander 1988:213)
       four man
       four men

(15) kwaha kītī   (Alexander 1988:213)
       many   animal
       many animals

(16) kwaha ña   (Alexander 1988:214)
       many   she
       many of them

(17) ūn   ndivi   (Alexander 1988:214)
       one egg
       an egg or *one egg*

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[5] Alexander in this case uses SPEC as a grammatical category: "There are two elements that precede the nucleus, specifier and quantifier; the specifier occurs next to the nucleus." (Alexander 1988: 212). The māa or ndá are both described as specifiers in Alexander's work. They mean "that very one" or in the case of the plural, "those very ones." The term SPEC as used by Alexander has nothing to do with Government and Binding's use of the same word.

Quantifiers in adjectival position, following the noun, are interpreted as ordinals.

(18) kivi   úshi   (Alexander 1988:218)
     day   ten
     the tenth day

The demonstrative pronoun follows the head noun, as shown in (19)-(20).

(19) sāhmā   yáhá   (Alexander 1988:219)
     cloth   this
     this cloth

(20) tīna   ñúkwán   (Alexander 1988:219)
     dog   that
     that dog

The following four examples introduce two degree words and show their position in relation to the head noun and to each other. The order is noun, adjective, and then degree words. The nī always follows the ka when they are both present. The degree words function as phrase-level clitics modifying the entire phrase preceding them.

(21) ndīkā   nī   (Alexander 1988:219)
     banana   LIM
     just a banana

(22) sāhmā   ñukwán   nī   (Alexander 1988:219)
     cloth   that   LIM
     just that cloth

(23) ndīka   ka   (Alexander 1988:219)
     banana   ADD
     more bananas

(24) īta   nī   ka   (Alexander 1988:219)
     flower   LIM   ADD
     just more flowers

Examples (25)-(26) show a combination of all the elements introduced thus far. Note the ndá plural marker preceding the head noun, the adjective following it and the demonstrative ñúkwán after the adjective.

(25) ndá   sāhmā   lúlí   ñúkwán   (Alexander 1988:220)
     PL   cloth   little   that
     those little cloths

(26) uu   ndá ndīkā   náhnú   ñúkwán   nī   ka   (Alexander 1988:220)
     two   PL banana   big:PL   that   LIM   ADD
     just those two big bananas

Simple possession, with the possessor following the head noun, is shown in (27)-(28).

(27) shini   tí:ñí   (Alexander 1988:222)
     head   mouse
     the mouse's head

(28) shīní   vétu   (Alexander 1988:223)
     hat   Robert
     Robert's hat

The following two examples show the position of the possessor in relation to the other elements previously introduced. Note specifically that the possessor follows the adjective in (29) and it also follows the degree words in (30).

(29) uu   sehē   lūlí   tīna   (Alexander 1988:223)
     two   child   little   dog
     the dog's two little pups

(30) uu   vēhē   nī   ka   teē   ñúkwán   (Alexander 1988:223)
     two   house   LIM   ADD   man   that
     that man's only two houses

This last example illustrates possessor nesting.

(31) [[[[tīna]   sehe]   ñāni]   teē   ñúkwán]   (Alexander 1988:224)
     dog   child   brother:ME   man   that
     that man's brother's child's dog

In order to accommodate all the distinct positions required, I use a version of the DP hypothesis (Abney 1987, Stowell 1989) as shown in the following tree diagram. Quantifiers and/or determiners head the DP. The possessor occupies the specifier of DP on the right and Degree words adjoin to D'. The NP complement has the demonstrative in its right specifier position, and adjectives right-adjoin to N'. The only required element is N^0.

(32)
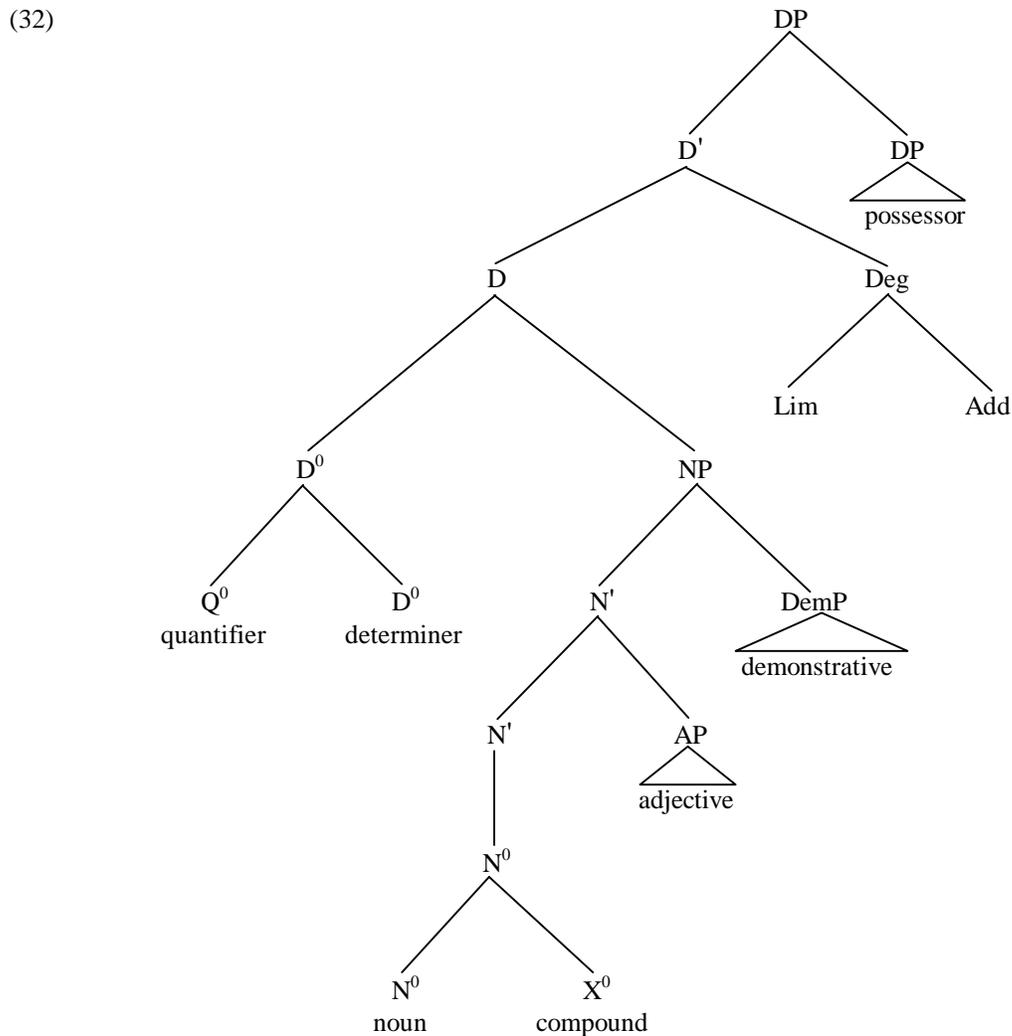
2.4. Prepositional Phrase

As expected for VSO languages, the P comes before its complement NP.

(33) xíín   ndá sehē̄   de   (Alexander 1988:242)
     with   PL   child   his:RES
     with his children

(34) mahñú   vēhē̄   (Alexander 1988:242)
     between   house
     between the houses

A simple tree for (34) is given below in (35)

(35)   PP
                              |
                             P'
                        ┌─────┴─────┐
                        P   DP
                     mahñú   △
                    between   vehe
                                  house
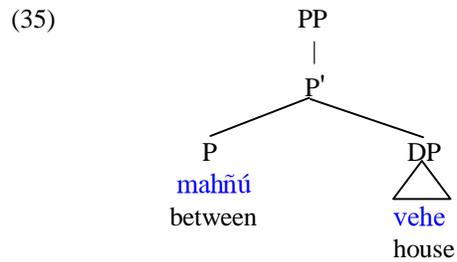
Body part nouns are also used as prepositions, as shown in (36)-(37).

(36) īni   ñū̄nu   (Alexander 1988:301)
     insides   net:bag
     in a net bag

(37) nuu   ñāhān   (Alexander 1988:227)
     face   woman
     in front of the woman or *to the woman*

3. Yes/No questions.

3.1. Main clause Yes/No questions.

Yes/No Questions in Ocotepec Mixtec are very simple. Any declarative sentence can be made into a Yes/No Question by simply preceding it with the interrogative marker **á.** This marker is placed in the $C_{[+q]}$ position in the tree structure, as is shown in (39) for example (38).

(38) á   kíshin   nu   (Alexander 1988:181)
     INT   CON:sleep   you:FAM
     Are you sleeping?

(39)

(40) á   n-taān   (Alexander 1988:181)
     INT   COM-quake
     Was there an earthquake?

(41) á   māéstru   kúū   de   (Alexander 1988:182)
     INT   teacher   CON:be   he:RES
     Is he a teacher?

Example (41) shows that focus movement may occur in Yes/No questions. The tree for (41) is given in (42).

(42)

3.2. *Embedded Yes/No questions.*

Embedded Yes/No questions have the same internal structure as main clause Yes/No questions. The CP$_{[+q]}$ is subcategorized for by the matrix verb and is thus connected at the V' node. Example (43) illustrates such a sentence, and its tree structure is shown in (44).

(43) katuhún   ní   de   á   ne•ndā[6]   ñāni   de
     POT:ask   you:RES   him:RES   INT   COM:return   brother:ME   his:RES
     Ask him if his brother has returned.   (Alexander 1988:187)

(44)

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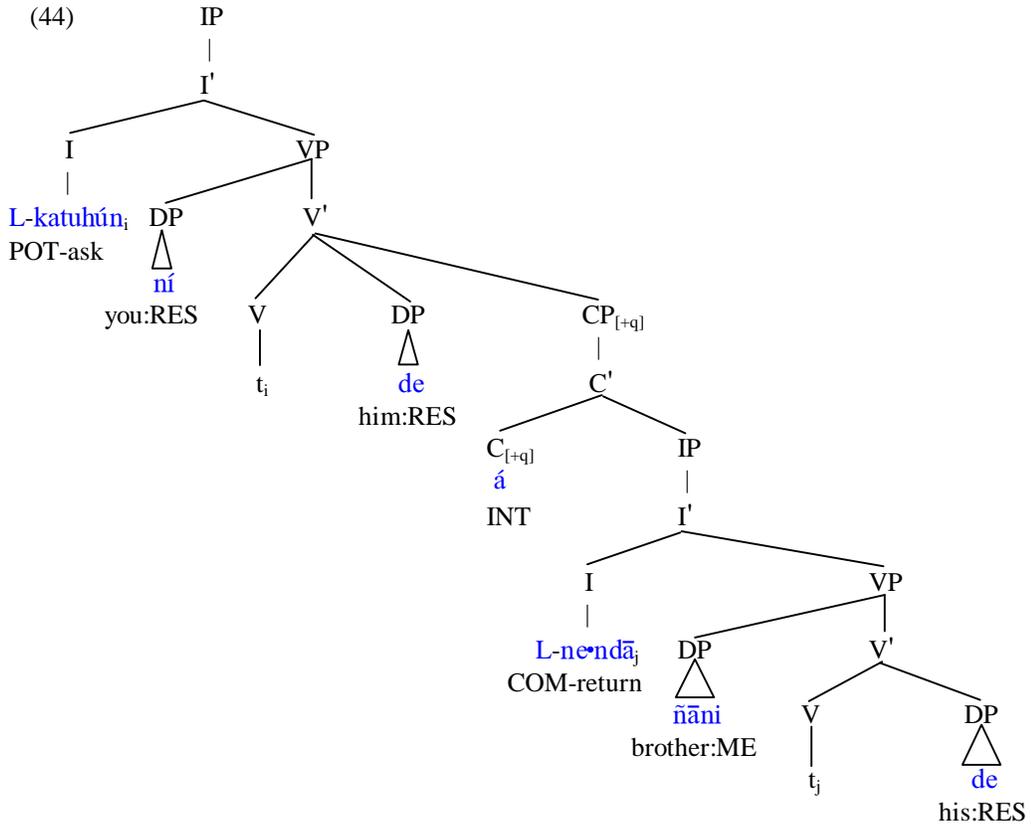
4. Content Questions.

4.1. Main Clause

The Wh-questions are formed in a manner similar to English questions. That is, the Wh-phrase starts in its subcategorized position in the clause and then is fronted. The subject, object or any nominal complement as well as adverbials can be questioned, as shown in the following examples.[7]

Questioning subjects and objects.

(45) naá[8]   chóho   (Alexander 1988:182)
     what   CON:cook
     What is cooking?

(46) naá   kí:kū   ñā   (Alexander 1988:183)
     what   CON:sew   she
     What is she sewing?

(47) na   ñāhān   n-ku•nū   shikin   yáhá   (Alexander 1988:183)
     what   woman   COM:weave   tunic   this
     Who wove this tunic?

(48) ní   kúū   xa   váxī   (Alexander 1988:184)
     who   CON:be UN   INC:come
     Who is coming?

(49) na   njīvi   n-ka•nā   de   (Alexander 1988:183)
     what   person COM-COM:call   he/him:RES
     Whom did he invite?   or   Who invited him?[9]

(50) ní   kúū   xa⸴   n-ka•nā[10]   de   (Alexander 1988:185)
     who   CON:be UN:COM COM-COM:call   he/him:RES
     Whom did he invite?   or   Who invited him?

Questioning verbal complements.

(51) naá   kúu   ñā   (Alexander 1988:183)
     what   CON:be   she
     What is she?

(52) naá   teē kúu   de   (Alexander 1988:183)
     what   man CON:be   he:RES
     Who is he?

(53) na   sehē   kúu   xīn   (Alexander 1988:184)
     what   child   CON:be   he:FAM
     Whose child is he?

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[7] The translation of na as *what*, and ní as *who*, or *where* is somewhat misleading perhaps. Ruth Mary Alexander tells me that they are really less specific and more specific counterparts of the same function. na is a general questioning word: any of many, ní is more specific. It is like English *which*, a selection from a known group.

[8] naá is an interrogative pronoun. na is an interrogative demonstrative.

[9] Without a context there is no way of knowing which argument raised.

[10] Com-Com is used because the aspect is represented here both by a tone and a prefix. This type of glossing is used in the source.

Questioning adjuncts.

When   nama

    (54) nāmā n-ku•ū   de   prēsīdénte   (Alexander 1988:186)
        when COM-COM:be   he:RES   president
        When was he president?

    (55) na   kwiya   n-ku•ū   de   prēsīdénte   (Alexander 1988:186)
        what   year   COM-COM:be   he:RES   president
   *What year was he president?*

Why   nuku

    (56) nukū sákwíhná   de   ndātíñú   ñāni   de   (Alexander 1988:186)
        why   CON:steal   he:RES   thing   brother:ME   his:RES
        Why does he steal his brother's things?

Where ní

    (57) ní   kwahan   de   (Alexander 1988:185)
        where INC:go   he:RES
        Where did he go?

    (58) ní   kúū   nuu kikū   ñā   sāhmā   (Alexander 1988:185)
        where CON:be   face POT:sew she   cloth
        Where will she sew the cloth?

For now, we will assume that this fronting is the normal movement of a [+wh] phrase to the Specifier of the CP$_{[+q]}$, as shown in (59) for example (46). (In section 5.5 we provide a different analysis.)

(59)
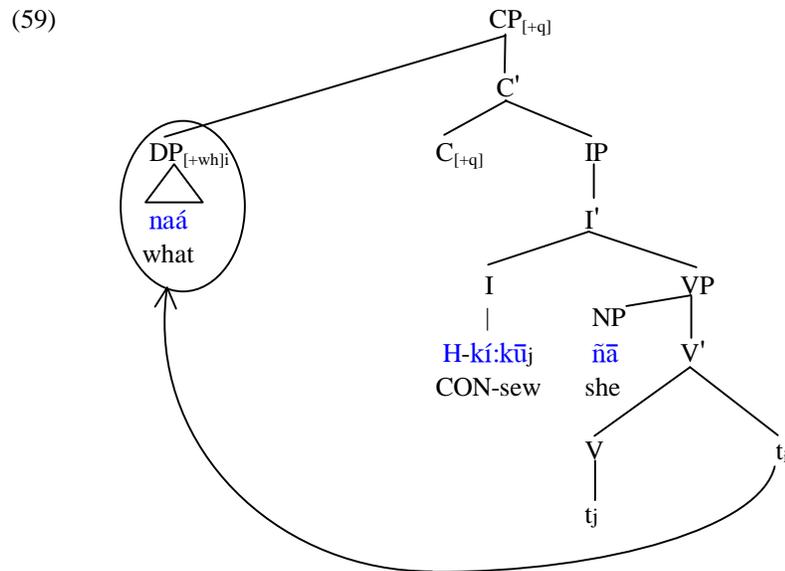
Similarly the tree in (60) illustrates example (54) with an interrogative adjunct.

(60)
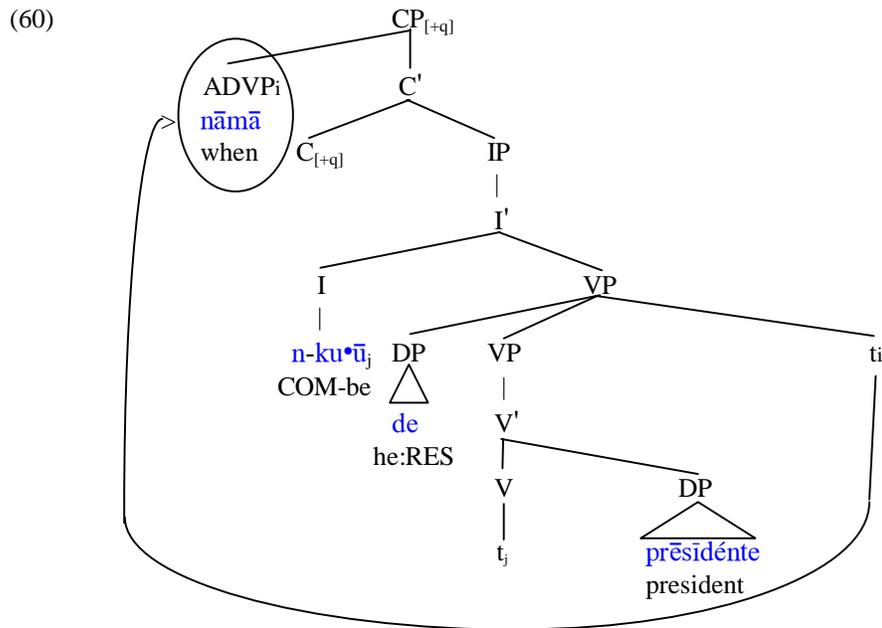
The following examples with the Wh-phrases in situ are ungrammatical.[11]

(61) *n-ku•nū   na   ñāhān   shikin   yáhá
     COM-COM:weave   what   woman   tunic   this
     (Who wove this tunic?)

(62) *n-ka•nā   de   na   njīvi
     COM-COM:call   he/him:RES   what   person
     (Whom did he invite?)

(63) *n-ka•nā   na   njīvi   de
     COM-COM:call   what   person   he/him:RES
     (Who invited him?)

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[11] Personal conversation with Ruth Mary Alexander, July 1996.

4.2. Embedded Wh questions.

Example (64) demonstrates that embedded Wh-questions parallel main clause Wh-questions.[12] Its tree structure is given in (65)

(64) xíni   ñā   naá   ndóhō   de   (Alexander 1988:187)
       CON:know she   what   CON:suffer he:RES
       She knows what is the matter with him. or *She knows what has happened to him.*
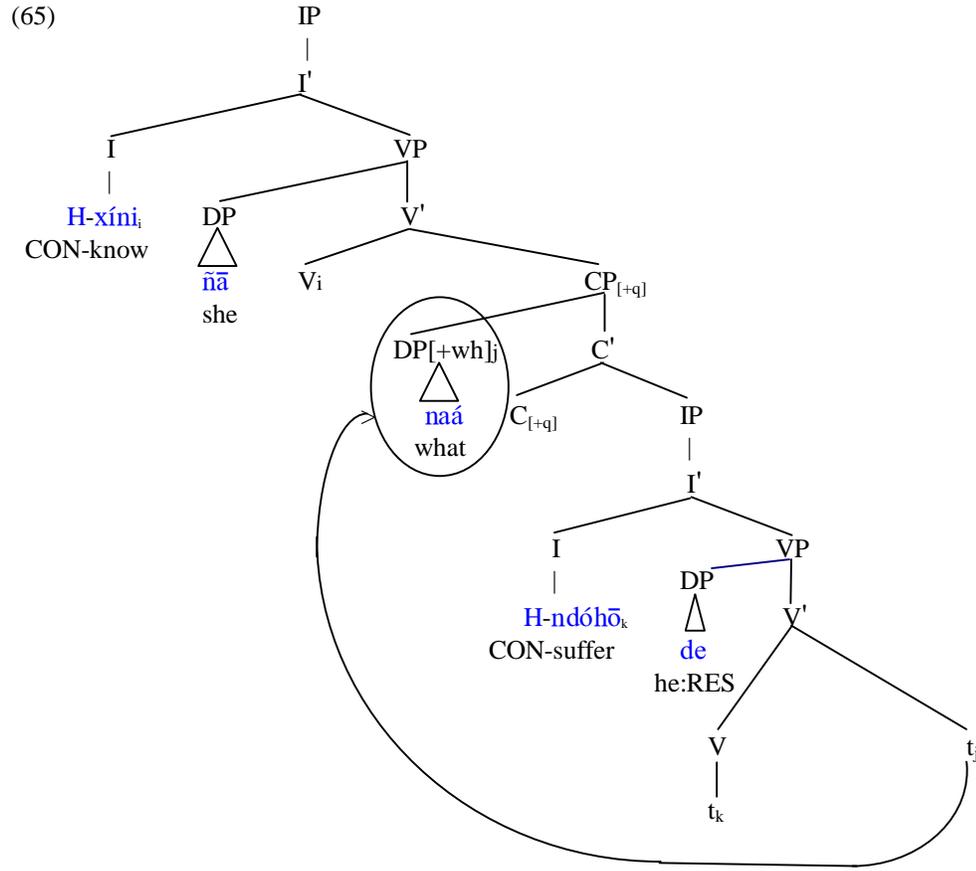
(65)

(i) dē   ndūú   ná   íñí   yáhá   (Alexander 1988:297)
      and   NEG:CON:be   what   CON:stand   here
      and there hasn't been anyone standing here.

The following utterance is an interesting exception that seems to be reminiscent of Polish since it looks like more than one Wh-word is fronted.

(ii) na   ní   nuu xíkā   ki   tū nú   (Alexander 1988:303)
       what   where   face CON:walk   recently REP you:FAM
       Where were you walking just now?

This is part of a text elicited from a native speaker. The free translation only gives a single question, making the function of these two question words unclear. Ruth Mary Alexander (p.c., July 1996) explained that she was uncertain whether this was normal speech. Until a native speaker of the language can be asked, or other data found, nothing else can be done to test or analyze this particular example.

5. Inversion in Questions

Inversion occurs in two constructions: interrogative prepositional phrases and interrogative possessive phrases. The phenomenon of inversion in question formation is shared by various language families throughout Meso-America (Smith Stark 1988). Data is presented in the first two sections, and then analyses which have been proposed for other languages are discussed. My proposal for Mixtec follows in section 5.5.

5.1. Pied-Piping with Inversion in interrogative prepositional phrases.

The following data illustrates the fact that interrogative prepositional phrases must front and invert. It is ungrammatical to extract just the Wh-phrase and leave the preposition in situ. Example (68) demonstrates that the final inversion is necessary.

(66) ní   nuu ndée   ñā   (Alexander 1988:185)
      where face CON:sit   she
      Where does she live?

(67) na   nuu xehē   de   tūtu   (Alexander 1988:185)
      what   face COM:give   he:RES   paper
      To whom did he give that paper?

(68) *nuu na   xehē   de   tūtu[13]
      face   what   COM:give   he:RES   paper
      (To whom did he give that paper?)

5.2. Inversion in interrogative possessive phrases.

Interrogative possessive phrases also must front and invert much like the data in 5.1.

(69) na   sehē   kúū   xīn   (Alexander 1988:184)
      what   child   CON:be   he:FAM
      Whose child is he?

The published data on Ocotepec Mixtec had only this example for *whose.* In Ocotepec Mixtec, na is used for *what* and *who*. In order to clarify that these are indeed possessors,[14] I also included here data from two other Mixtec languages which illustrate this fronting and inversion. In (70) the noun phrase shó ñaha *what person* acts as the possessor of doo *cloth*, and in (71) the possessor is yō *who* and it has fronted from after the adjective.

(70) shó   ñaha   doo   (Small 1990:359)[15]
      what   person   cloth   Coatzospan Mixtec
      whose clothes?

(71) yō   tinā lōhō   (Shields 1988:368)
      who   dog   small:SG   Silacayoapan Mixtec
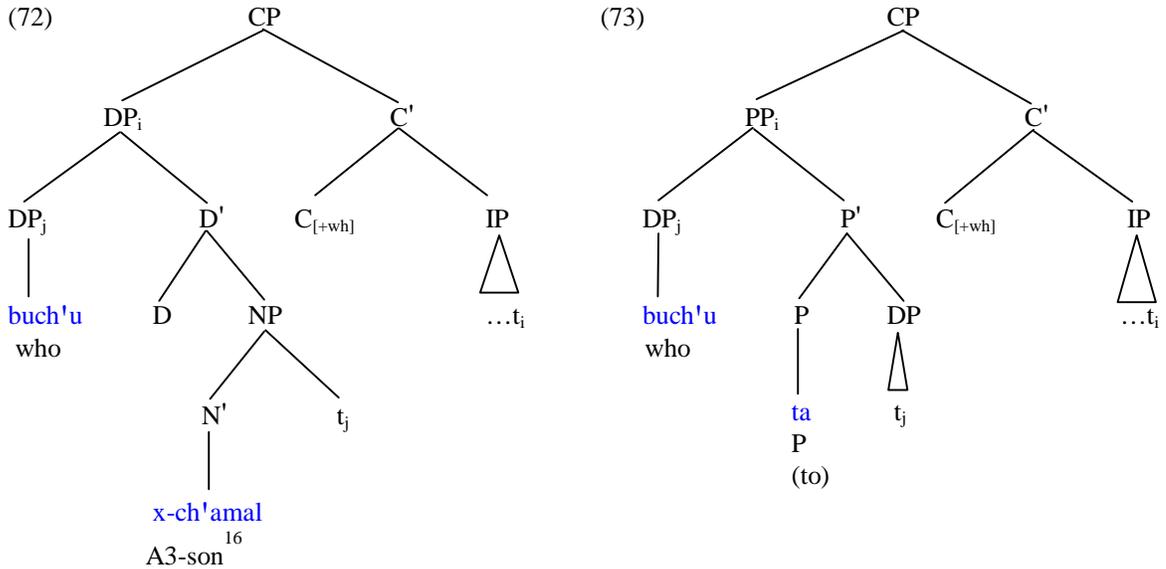   *whose little dog?*

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[13] Personal conversation with Ruth Mary Alexander, January 2000.

[14] Note that na *what* as a demonstrative would start in specifier of NP position and also undergo inversion.

[15] Although (70) and (71) are not complete sentences, the sources that contain them clearly state that they are ordered before the verb (Small 1990:357, Shields 1988:367).

5.3. Aissen's proposal for Tzotzil.

For both interrogative prepositional phrases and possessive phrases in Tzotzil, Aissen (1996:464, 471) assumes movement of the whole phrase to the specifier of CP with secondary movement to either the specifier of DP or PP. See (72) for an example with DP and (73) for an example of PP.

(72)

```
                    CP
                  /    \
               DP_i     C'
              /   \    /   \
          DP_j    D'  C_[+wh]  IP
           |     /  \           △
        buch'u  D   NP         …t_i
         who       /  \
                  N'   t_j
                  |
               x-ch'amal
               A3-son [16]
```

(73)

```
                    CP
                  /    \
               PP_i     C'
              /   \    /   \
          DP_j    P'  C_[+wh]  IP
           |     /  \           △
        buch'u  P   DP         …t_i
         who    |   △
               ta   t_j
               P
              (to)
```

Aissen (1996:464) claims these movements are motivated by the need for abstract agreement. In (72) buch'u agrees with D and DP_i through specifier-head agreement and the projection of a head to its phrase. DP_i agrees with $C_{[+wh]}$ because it is in the specifier of CP. By transitivity, $C_{[+wh]}$ agrees with buch'u. Similarly in (73) buch'u agrees with P and therefore PP. PP agrees with $C_{[+wh]}$. Transitivity again applies and buch'u agrees with $C_{[+wh]}$.

This analysis works for Tzotzil since it is a VOS language. Specifiers of lexical phrases are on the right side, but functional specifiers are on the left side.

However in Mixtec, which is a VSO language, the specifier of the DP on the right is already filled with possessor, as shown in section 2.3. The case is not as clear for the PP, but Mixtec appears to follow Zapotec where all [-V] specifiers are on the right, with [+V] specifiers and extensions of V, like IP and CP, on the left (Black 1994:299-300).
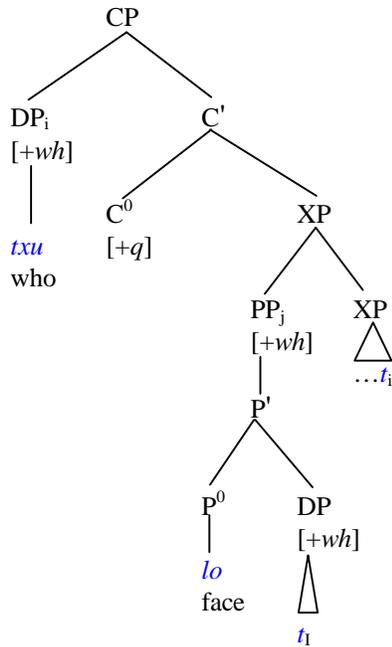
Therefore movement to the specifier of PP and DP is not an option for Mixtec languages.

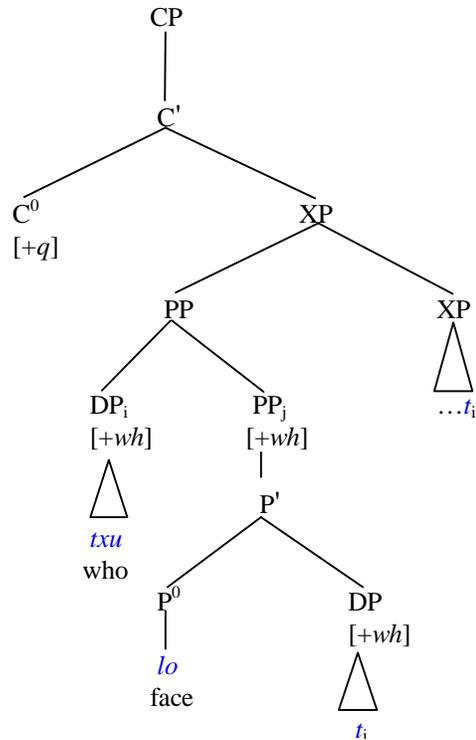[16] A3 is third person singular absolutive agreement (Aissen 1996:Appendix).

5.4. Black's proposal for Zapotec.

At lease some Zapotecan languages have an overt $C_{[+q]}$ before the Wh-word or phrase, so Black (1994) argues that the Wh-phrase adjoins to the phrase immediately below $C_{[+q]}$ (either IP or NegP), in a minimal government relationship. This leaves two options available for the secondary movement needed for inversion: to the Spec of $CP_{[+q]}$ or adjoined to the moved Wh-phrase below $C_{[+q]}$. Black (1994:170) provides the following examples and analyses.

(74)   a. In Specifier of CP   (75)   b. Adjoined to the moved phrase below C^0

```
            CP                                            CP
           /  \                                            |
      DPᵢ        C'                                         C'
     [+wh]      /  \                                       /  \
       |      C⁰       XP                            C⁰           XP
      txu   [+q]      /  \                          [+q]         /    \
      who         PPⱼ      XP                              PP           XP
                 [+wh]     △                             /   \          △
                   |      …tᵢ                        DPᵢ      PPⱼ      …tᵢ
                   P'                               [+wh]    [+wh]
                  /  \                                △        |
                P⁰      DP                           txu       P'
                 |     [+wh]                         who      /  \
                lo      △                                   P⁰     DP
               face    tᵢ                                   |     [+wh]
                                                           lo      △
                                                          face     tᵢ
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Note that the adjunction option would also be possible if the whole phrase occupies the specifier of CP[+q] position.

5.5. Proposed analysis for Mixtec

I have not found any cases in Mixtec of an overt C$_{[+q]}$ co-occurring with a Wh-phrase. However, examples (76)-(77) show that focused phrases and Wh-phrases cannot co-occur in Mixtec. The focused phrase must be in situ after the verb.

(76) ní   tee   shi:kó   nuni xehe tātá   de[17]
     which man CON:sell corn foot father he:RES
     Who sells corn FOR THE SAKE OF HIS FATHER?
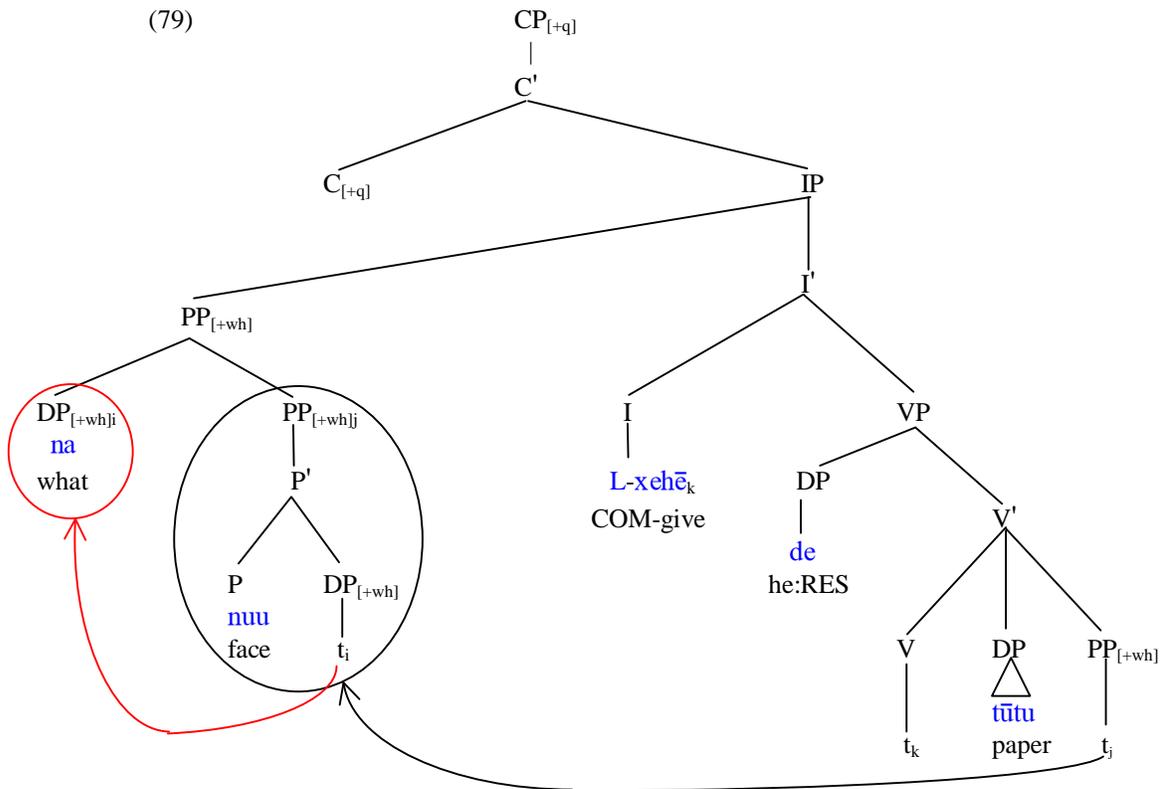
(77) *ní   tee   xehe   tātá   de   shi:kó   nuni
     which man foot   father   his:RES CON:sell corn
     (Which man, for the sake of his father, sells corn?)

Example (78) shows that a focused phrase may occur in a yes/no question. It is clear that the position of the focus phrase is below CP$_{[+q]}$.

(78) á   xehe tātá   de   shi:kó   de   nuni   (Alexander 1988:182)
     INT   foot father   his:RES CON:sell he:RES   corn
     Does he sell corn FOR THE SAKE OF HIS FATHER?

Therefore, I propose that Wh-phrases and focus phrases both occupy the specifier of IP position. I choose the adjunction option for the secondary movement, since the movement to specifier of CP requires an extraction that is not allowed from its original position, as shown by the fact that pied-piping is required.

Tree (79) gives the tree for example (67) with a fronted prepositional phrase.

(79)

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[17] Examples (76) and (77) are from correspondence with Ruth Mary Alexander, December 1999.

Tree (80) shows the proposed analysis for an interrogative possessive phrase, example (69).

(80)

CP$_{[+q]}$

C'

C$_{[+q]}$ IP

DP$_{[+wh]}$ I'

DP$_{[+wh]i}$ DP$_{[+wh]j}$ I   VP

na   H-kúū$_k$ DP
what   CON-be

D'   DP$_{[+wh]}$ xīn
                                          he:FAM
sehē   t$_i$
child   V'

                                          V   DP$_{[+wh]}$

                                          t$_k$ t$_j$

Note that abstract agreement can still hold in the adjoined structure. It does not explain why the movement must take place in the possessive phrases, however, since the possessor already occupies the specifier of the DP$_{[+wh]}$ on the right, so abstract agreement would hold before the inversion. Some other constraint requiring Wh-phrases to be peripheral must be involved.[18]

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[18] Black (1994:171-2) suggests that a ranking of the Wh-Criterion over the ECP may be involved. Broadwell (1999) provides an Optimality Theory account to allow for the variation from the normal order of specifiers, heads, and complements seen in these inversion constructions.

6. Conclusion

I have shown that the VSO surface order of Ocotepec Mixtec can be analyzed in such a way that it falls within the constraints and universals of Government and Binding Theory. I have done this by positing an SVO D-structure with the subject internal to the VP, then raising the verb to the Infl position.

I have then illustrated how Mixtec Yes/No questions are formed, and analyzed the word order in content questions as arising from required movement of the Wh-phrase.

The analysis of Pied-Piping with Inversion accounts for the unique word order required when the Wh phrase is a PP: the whole PP$_{[+wh]}$ must front, then the DP$_{[+wh]}$ object fronts again. Similar fronting with inversion occurs in interrogative possessive phrases. Due to differences in word order and phrase structure between Tzotzil and Mixtec, I was not able to directly utilize Aissen's (1998) analysis of movement to the specifier of the functional projection. Instead, I propose that the secondary movement adjoins the minimal Wh-phrase to the pied-piped phrase, which occupies the specifier of IP position directly below C$_{[+q]}$ (similar to Black's (1994) analysis of Zapotec).

Though this proposal provides a structural account for the inversion, an explanation for what motivates the inversion across language families throughout Meso-America is still lacking.

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